

## Underage Drinking Prevention Talking Points

Illegal alcohol use by those under age 21 has been declining steadily since 2002, but it still occurs too often and at levels that substantially increase a young person's risk of injury or death. Use the following talking points for your Town Hall Meeting media outreach and presentations to encourage your community to mobilize behind its prevention. Replace or supplement these statistics with local data for even greater effect.

### Prevalence

More young people use alcohol than any other drug, including tobacco or marijuana.[1]

- ▶ In 2010, an estimated 10 million 12- to 20-year-olds, or more than one out of every four, reported drinking. Of this number:
  - 17 percent were binge drinkers (consuming five or more drinks at one time in the last 2 weeks); and
  - 5.1 percent were heavy drinkers (binge drinking on at least 5 days out of the past month).[2]
- ▶ Alcohol use begins early and increases rapidly with age. Although the peak period of first use of alcohol is 7th to 10th grade, 10 percent of 9- to 10-year-olds have already started drinking; more than one fifth of underage drinkers begin before they are 13 years old.[1]
- ▶ An estimated 2,842 young people aged 12 to 14 initiated alcohol use per day in 2009, meaning that a little more than 1 million youth under age 15 initiate alcohol use each year.[1]
- ▶ Those who begin drinking alcohol before the age of 15 are 6.6 times more likely than those who start at age 21 and older to develop alcohol problems.[2]
- ▶ In 2009, 64,831 12- to 20-year-olds were admitted for alcohol treatment in the United States, accounting for 8 percent of all treatment admissions for alcohol abuse.[3]
- ▶ Your home or the home of your child's friend is the most likely place where underage alcohol use occurs. Among 12- to 20-year-olds who were current drinkers in 2010, 30.3 percent drank in their own home while more than half (53.4 percent) drank in someone else's home.[4]
- ▶ Underage drinkers are able to purchase or obtain alcohol from relatives and friends at an unacceptably high rate. In 2010, among 12- to 20-year-olds who drank:
  - 30.6 percent, or almost one in three, paid for the last alcohol drink they consumed;
  - 26.4 percent, or more than one in four, got it for free from a nonrelative aged 21 or older;
  - 14.6 percent got it for free from another underage person;
  - 5.9 percent got it from a parent or guardian; and
  - 8.5 percent got it from another relative aged 21 or older.[5]

## Consequences

Underage drinking contributes to a range of costly health and social problems, including traffic fatalities, suicide, physical and sexual assault, brain impairment, alcohol dependence, academic problems, and alcohol and drug poisoning.[1]

- ▶ During 2009, underage alcohol use contributed to an estimated:
  - 1,506 traffic fatalities and 36,963 nonfatal traffic injuries;
  - 1,844 homicides;
  - 949,400 nonfatal violent crimes such as rape, robbery, and assault;
  - 1,811,300 property crimes, including burglary, larceny, and car theft; and
  - 28,161 teen pregnancies and 937,972 teens having risky sex.[3]
- ▶ Underage drinking cost U.S. citizens an estimated \$62.0 billion in 2010 for related medical care, work loss, and associated pain and suffering.[3]

## Trends

Underage drinkers are much more likely than adults to drink heavily and recklessly:

- ▶ Young drinkers tend to drink less often than adults, but they drink more heavily when they do drink. For example, according to the Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation, 92 percent of the alcohol consumed by 12- to 14-year-olds is through binge drinking.[1]
- ▶ Alcohol use by girls is up. Adolescent females now exhibit rates of drinking, binge drinking, and getting drunk similar to rates for adolescent males. Certain consequences of alcohol use (e.g., unintended pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, and interpersonal violence) may be expected to increase as a result.[1]
- ▶ Distilled spirits are becoming more popular among adolescents and are challenging beer as the beverage most likely to be consumed by underage drinkers, especially among youth who report binge drinking.[1]

## References

1. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2011). *Report to Congress on the prevention and reduction of underage drinking*, from <http://store.samhsa.gov/product/Report-to-Congress-on-the-Prevention-and-Reduction-of-Underage-Drinking/SMA11-4645>.
2. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2011). *Results from the 2010 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: Summary of national findings*, from <http://www.samhsa.gov/data/NSDUH/2k10Results/Web/PDFW/2k10Results.pdf>.
3. Underage Drinking Enforcement Training Center. (N.D.). Underage drinking costs, from <http://www.udetc.org/UnderageDrinkingCosts.asp>.
4. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (August 28, 2008). Underage alcohol use: Where do young people drink? *The NSDUH Report*, from <http://oas.samhsa.gov/2k8/location/underage.htm>.
5. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (November 20, 2008). Underage alcohol use: Where do young people get alcohol? *The NSDUH Report*, from <http://oas.samhsa.gov/2k8/underagegetalc/underagegetalc.htm>.

For additional talking point resources, visit the Interagency Coordinating Committee on the Prevention of Underage Drinking's Statistics Web page, at <http://www.stopalcoholabuse.gov/Statistics.aspx>.